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PROGRAMME PLANNING

Methodology for monitoring and reporting the programme performance of the United Nations

Report of the Secretary-General

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* A/46/50.

I. INTRODUCTION

1. The monitoring of programme implementation is part of the planning, budgeting, monitoring and evaluation cycle established in the United Nations by the end of the 1970s. The Regulation and associated rules governing the various aspects of this cycle were adopted by the General Assembly in its resolution 37/234 of 21 December 1982 and then issued in 1987 as a Bulletin of the Secretary-General. 1/ Article V, entitled "Monitoring of programme implementation", include three regulations, 5.1, 5.2 and 5.3, and two rules, 105.1 and 105.2. Regulation 5.1 states that the Secretary-General shall monitor the delivery of outputs scheduled in the approved programme budget through a central unit in the Secretariat. Regulation 5.2 stipulates that an entire subprogramme shall not be reformulated nor a new programme introduced in the programme budget without the prior approval of an intergovernmental body and the General Assembly. Regulation 5.3 indicates that the biennial programme performance report shall be presented to Member States by the end of the first quarter following the completion of the biennial budget.

2. To date, four programme performance reports have been presented to the General Assembly, which has regularly called for improvements in these reports. Most recently, in his report on programme performance for the biennium 1988-1989, the Secretary-General referred to a number of methodological issues that needed to be addressed to improve the monitoring and reporting system (A/45/218 and Add.1). The Committee for Programme and Coordination, at its thirtieth session, concurred with this analysis and stressed the need for the following changes in the approach to the monitoring of programme implementation:

(a) A comprehensive monitoring of all activities of the Organization, and not only of measurable outputs as currently defined;

(b) A more satisfactory categorization of outputs, taking into account their diversity and their very different weights both in terms of resources used and relevance to Member States;

(c) A distinction between activities and outputs financed from the regular budget and activities and outputs, including operational projects, financed from extrabudgetary resources;

(d) A reassessment of the criteria used in the monitoring exercise, notably measurement of performance and reformulation, postponement, termination and addition of outputs or activities;

(e) Programme performance reports should include data on the use of resources during the biennium.

3. The Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions considered the same report of the Secretary-General and stated that, in view of the limitations of the current approach, the Committee "questions the

usefulness of the present report to Member States and believes that issuances of further programme performance reports should be suspended pending a resolution of the underlying methodological difficulties" (see A/45/617, para. 23).

4. By section II of resolution 45/253 of 21 December 1990, the General Assembly took note of the report of the Secretary-General and of the observations of the Advisory Committee, endorsed the conclusions and recommendations of the Committee for Programme and Coordination, and requested the Secretary-General "to submit to the General Assembly, at its forty-sixth session, through the Committee for Programme and Coordination at its thirty-first session and the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions, a report on the methodology for monitoring and reporting the programme performance of the United Nations".

5. The present report is submitted in accordance with that request. While not proposing fundamental changes, it outlines an approach which could be adopted for the monitoring and reporting of the programme implementation of the programme budget for the biennium 1992-1993.

II. ELEMENTS FOR CHANGES IN THE PROGRAMME PERFORMANCE REPORT

6. The first purpose of the monitoring exercise is to report to Member States on the degree of implementation of the activities indicated in the programme budget of the Organization. These activities are diverse. They include "outputs" as defined in the annex to the Regulations and Rules, i.e. "specific products or services, e.g. training, servicing of meetings, reports, publications or advisory, editorial, translation and security services, which an activity is expected to produce in order to achieve its objectives". Some of these "products" are "measurable" in the sense that they can be identified in the programme budget with some precision and counted. The report on programme performance can then indicate, for instance, that in section X so many publications were programmed and implemented. Others of these "products and services", for example, advisory services, are more difficult to identify precisely in the programme budget and therefore less "measurable". Activities of the Organization also include those which do not generate "physical outputs" and are nevertheless mentioned in the programme budget because they are part of the functioning of the Organization and involves the use of resources. Examples of this type of activity are support to intergovernmental negotiations, good offices, the promotion of legal instruments, as well as coordination and consultation with governmental and non-governmental organizations. Currently, some of these activities are considered as "intermediary" while others are not captured in the programme performance report.

7. In the proposed programme budget for 1992-1993 an attempt has been made to regroup all activities of the Organization within eight major categories. These are the following:

(a) International cooperation

(i) Settlement of disputes, special missions, good offices, fact-finding, emergency and humanitarian relief services, legal services;

(ii) Promotion of legal instruments;

(iii) Depository services;

(iv) General legal advice and services;

(v) External relations;

(b) Parliamentary services

(i) Parliamentary documentation;

(ii) Substantive services;

(iii) Technical secretariat services;

(iv) Ad hoc expert groups;

(c) Published material

(i) Recurrent publications;

(ii) Non-recurrent publications;

(iii) Technical material;

(d) Information material and services

Seven types of information materials have been indicated under this category;

(e) Operational activities

(i) Advisory services;

(ii) Group training, including seminars and workshops and fellowships;

(iii) Field projects;

(f) Coordination, harmonization and liaison

(g) Conference services

Six types of conference services have been identified under this category;

(h) Administrative support

This category includes six types of services.

8. The above list includes activities that are not "programmed" in the traditional sense. Subject to revisions, it should, however, provide a more comprehensive picture of the activities of the Organization than the current distinction between "outputs" and "intermediary activities". In order to have a comprehensive report to Member States on the level of implementation of all these diverse activities, it would seem that the idea of a single standardized format of the programme performance report is no longer workable. Four separate formats appear to be more adequate. Each would correspond to the following:

(a) First would be the reporting on "outputs" which are specifically indicated in the programme budget, such as reports and publications. These products account for a large part of the work programme of the Organization notably in the economic and social sectors. Form 1, given in the annex to the present report, indicates the format which could be adopted in the programme performance report.

(b) A second format would correspond to activities such as promotion of legal instruments or external relations, which are described in the programme budget in general terms and which are not part of the traditional definition of "outputs". Form 2 suggests how such activities would be reported.

(c) Operational activities, as defined in paragraph 7 (e) above, would be the subject of a third type of reporting, which is illustrated in Form 3.

(d) The fourth type of reporting would capture conference services and administrative support with relevant workload indicators. The breakdown of such services and support activities is provided in Form 4.

9. The second purpose of the monitoring exercise is to provide an analysis of the changes which occur during the implementation of the activities outlined in the programme budget as adopted by the General Assembly. Some outputs are postponed to the next biennium, others are added either by legislative decision or at the initiative of the Secretariat. The programme performance report for the biennium 1988-1989 illustrates the magnitude of such changes in the work programme of the Organization. While keeping most concepts currently in use (activities/outputs programmed, implemented, postponed, terminated and added), it is proposed to include in the monitoring report an analysis of the reasons for postponements, terminations and additions to the work programme. A format for such analysis is indicated in annex II.

10. An attempt could also be made to include in the programme performance report an indication of the work-months utilized during the biennium for each of the relevant eight categories of activities included in the programme budget. A distinction would be made between regular budget and extrabudgetary resources. This proposed addition to the programme performance report is indicated in the forms included in annexes I and II.

11. The approach outlined above would have two main advantages. First, the programme peformance report would reflect the diversity of the activities of the Organization. For some of these activities, it would be possible to indicate at the section level and globally a "rate of implementation", that is to say, number of reports produced as compared to number of reports programmed in the budget. For others, only qualitative indications would be provided. Secondly, the same report would include an analysis, still at the section level and for the programme budget as a whole, of the changes that affect the implementation of the work programme. In this regard, it will be necessary for the Secretariat to establish a closer link between the provision of statements of programme budget implications and the monitoring exercise. It should be emphasized, however, that the question of the quality of the outputs and services provided by the Organization in relation to its objectives would remain outside the scope of such monitoring of programme implementation. Also, there would still be a need for separate reports on programme performance and budget performance.

Notes

1/ ST/SGB/PPBME Rules/1 (1987).

FORM 1

Activities quantified in the narrative of the programme budget for the biennium 1992-1993

Major activity/output	Programmed (1)	Implemented (2)	Postponed (3)	Terminated (4)	Added: Legislation (5)	Added: Secretariat (6)	Work-months utilized: RB (7)	Work-months utilized: XB (8)	Work-months utilized: Total (9)
Parliamentary services									
- Reports									
- Servicing of meetings									
- Background documents									
Published material									
- Recurrent publications									
- Non-recurrent publications									
- Technical material									
Information material and services									
- Booklets, fact sheets									
- Press releases									
- Exhibits and other visuals									
- Films and video tapes									
- Radio broadcasts, tapes of news									
- Guided tours and seminars									
- Special events									
Total									

Note: Definition of the terms used in Form 1:

(a) Programme activity (column 1). This column represents the frame of reference against which performance is reviewed. It groups all outputs specified in the narrative of the programme budget, including those financed from extrabudgetary resources.

(b) Implemented as programmes in (column 2). An output is considered implemented as programmed if it has been completed within the biennium in conformity with the description in the narrative of the programme budget.

(c) Postponed (column 3). An output is considered postponed if it is not delivered to the end users during the biennium, irrespective of its stage of implementation. A decision to postpone an output may be the result of considerations related to resources or logistics. Generally speaking, if resources are available, programme managers can exercise their authority to postpone an output, on the basis of programmatic consideration only, provided the output in question continues to be relevant during the next biennium.

(d) Terminated (column 4). The outputs terminated are those which could not be delivered during the biennium. Outputs are terminated either by legislative decision or at the discretion of programme managers as prescribed in rule 106.2 of the PPBME.

(e) Additional outputs (columns 5 and 6) refer to: (i) Outputs which are added by specific mandates subsequent to the approval by the General Assembly of the programme budget (column 5) (such additions are normally subject of a PBI); (ii) Outputs which are added at the initiative of the Secretariat in response to general legislation or other new developments (column 6).

(f) Work-months utilized (columns 7, 8 and 9) refer to professional work-months utilized during the biennium including consultants and other short-term expertise.

ANNEX 1

FORM 2

Activities not quantified in the narrative of the programme budget for the biennium 1992-1993

Major activity	Brief description of activities and its beneficiaries	Work-months utilized RB	XB	Total
International cooperation				
(a) Settlement of disputes				
(b) Promotion of legal instruments				
(c) Depository services				
(d) General advice and services				
(e) External relations				
Coordination, harmonization and liaison				

ANNEX 1

FORM 3

Operational activities

Advisory services

Programme/subprogramme (MTP)	(1) No. of requests received	(2) No. of requests implemented	(3) No. of missions	(4) Work-months available			(5) Work-months spent in field on advisory missions			(6) Work-months spent for preparation and follow-up work			Total (5) + (6)		
				RB	XB	Total	RB	XB	Total	RB	XB	Total	RB	XB	Total

Training Courses/Seminars/Workshops

	(1) Specific topics covered	(2) No. of participants/fellows	(3) Work-months advisory and other staff for substantive support		
			RB	XB	Total

Fellowships/grants

	(1) Number of fellowships awarded and Description	(2) Work-months utilized for substantive support		
		RB	XB	Total

Field projects a/

	(1) Number of projects programmed	(2) In progress as of January 92	(3) New to commence during 92-93	(4) Completed by December 93	(5) Work-months utilized for substantive support		
					RB	XB	Total

a/ A project is defined as in progress if the budget covering its activities, or its preparatory activities, has been approved. A project is defined as completed when all its programmed activities have been implemented.

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ANNEX I

FORM 4

Workload indicators relating to conference services and Administrative Support Units

Activities	Workload indicators	Work-months
CONFERENCE SERVICES		
- Editorial and official records services		
- Meeting, interpretation and verbatim reporting services		
- Translation services		
- Publishing services		
- Library services		
ADMINISTRATIVE SUPPORT		
Administrative support and management		
- Administration of justice		
- Staff-management relations		
- Technological innovations policies		
Human resources management		
- Programme Planning and Information Systems		
- Recruitment, placement and career development		
- Staff administration		
- Training		
- Medical and employee assistance		
Programme planning, budget and finance		
- Financial management and control systems		
- Contributions services		
- Financial accounting and reporting		
- Treasury services		
- Programme planning, budgeting and monitoring		
- Financial services relating to peace-keeping matters		
- Evaluation and management advisory services		

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FORM 4 (continued)

General services

- Security and safety
- Electronic support services
- Communications
- Field operations support
- Procurement
- Transportation
- Facilities management and maintenance
- Construction
- Archives and records management

Audit services

ANNEX II

Activities/outputs postponed, terminated or added during the biennium

Framework for an analysis

Activity/output postponed	Reasons for postponement				Work-months utilized 4/	
	Lack of anticipated resources 1/	Programmatic considerations 2/	Logistical reasons 3/	Other	RB	XB

Activity/output terminated	Reasons for termination			Work-months utilized 7/	
	Programmatic considerations 5/	Lack of available resources 6/	Other	RB	XB

Activity/output added	Source		Reasons for addition			Work-months utilized	
	Legislative decision	Initiative of Secretariat	Replaced postponed or terminated output	Availability of additional resources	Other	RB	XB

1/ In case of high priority output, explanation would be provided as to why a redeployment of resources was not possible.

2/ Unforeseen development requiring the redeployment of the resources to other activities.

3/ Basically delay in printing and/or final processing of completed outputs.

4/ Applicable only in case work on output was initiated during biennium.

5/ Reasons could be duplication or lack of relevancy which makes the output obsolete or of marginal usefulness.

6/ Indication why the output could not be postponed, along with the reason for the shortfall in resources.

7/ Applicable only in case work on output was initiated during biennium.